



NEWS RELEASE

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States Make Significant Progress in High School Reform Efforts

*Fifty-State Survey Finds One-Quarter of All States
Have Made Graduation Requirements Tougher*

WASHINGTON—April 18, 2007—One-quarter of all states have implemented significantly tougher graduation requirements, and virtually every state has taken steps to ratchet up expectations for high school students, according to a national survey of high school reform efforts conducted by Washington, D.C.-based Achieve, Inc.

The survey updates the efforts of all 50 states to align their high school standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and accountability systems with the demands of college and work, and finds that at least 48 states are now actively engaged in reform efforts of some kind. There is more momentum in the states now than at any time since education reform became a national priority with the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983.

Some of the most dramatic progress has been made in the area of graduation requirements, where 13 states, up from just two in 2004, now require high school students to complete a college- and work-ready curriculum in order to earn a diploma. According to the survey report, *Closing the Expectations Gap 2007*, 16 additional states are taking steps to implement similar graduation requirements, which include four years of challenging mathematics at least through Algebra II and four years of rigorous English.

States have also achieved significant progress in making academic standards rigorous enough in English and mathematics so that they accurately reflect real world expectations, but have moved more slowly in developing complementary assessment systems and holding high schools accountable for the college-readiness of their students.

“While the federal government has been driving K-8 education policy, states are leading the way on high school reform,” said Michael Cohen, president of Achieve. “This is a heavy lift for governors, but their leadership is urgently needed as states take the steps to prepare young people to succeed in the global economy where good jobs increasingly require some postsecondary education. College-ready skills are a must for every high school graduate today.”

“Despite significant progress, there is still an expectations gap for a majority of American students between what is required of them in high school and what will be required of them

after graduation,” said Matt Gandal, executive vice president of Achieve. “We owe it to all of our students to aim higher and arm them with the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful in college and the workplace. This is not just an economic imperative, it’s a moral imperative.”

The report comes two years after 45 of the nation’s governors joined leaders from education and business to make high school reform a national priority at the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools. Acknowledging that too few high school students graduate prepared for college and 21st-century jobs, governors at the Summit committed to dramatic state action to raise high school expectations and achievement in order to help ensure the nation’s competitive position in the global economy.

One of the most significant commitments made at the 2005 Summit was the creation of the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, a group of 13 states committed to preparing all students for college and work. Since the Summit the ADP Network has grown to include 29 states which collectively educate nearly 60 percent of all U.S. public school students. Achieve provides policy leadership, technical assistance and other support to ADP Network states (separately, Achieve announced recently that nine states within the ADP Network are now in the process of developing a common Algebra II end-of-course test).

In summary, Achieve’s report includes an analysis of high school reform efforts in several key categories, including:

- § Graduation Requirements: 13 States, up from just two in 2004 require high school students to complete a college and work ready curriculum to earn a diploma.
- § Academic Standards: 12 states report that their high school standards are aligned with college and workplace expectations, more than double the number from a year ago; 32 more states are in the process of aligning standards or plan to do so.
- § Assessment: nine states administer high school assessments that are also used by higher education to place students in credit bearing courses, and 21 others have plans to build such systems.
- § Accountability: nine states now hold high schools accountable for the college readiness of their graduates and offer incentives for improving college-ready graduation rates, while eight more are planning to do so.
- § Data Systems: five states now have longitudinal data systems that can track students from pre-K through college graduation; all but three states have plans to develop such systems.

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Created by the nation’s governors and business leaders, Achieve, Inc, is a bipartisan, non-profit organization that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, work and citizenship. Achieve was founded at the 1996 National Education Summit and has sponsored subsequent Summits in 1999, 2001 and 2005. At the 2005 Summit, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project Network, a coalition of 29 states committed to aligning high school expectations with the demands of college and the workplace. For more information, please visit www.achieve.org.